

Book Reviews

Matyáš Havrda. *The So-Called Eighth Stromateus by Clement of Alexandria: Early Christian Reception of Greek Scientific Methodology*. Philosophia Antiqua 144. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016. doi:10.1163/9789004325289.

It is common knowledge that it is much easier to produce an excessive number of words criticizing something than it is to find the proper words to speak highly of some worthy object of evaluation. It appears that the same rule applies when it comes to writing reviews of academic publications, too. In the case of Havrda's study of the Eighth Book of Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*, not much can be said. The reason for this is that it is, in fact, a reliably good piece of academic work that meets all of the accepted standards in the field of the history of ancient philosophy. In addition to in depth description of the work known as the *Eighth Stromateus* and all the questions that the latter raises, the publication provides a long needed new edition of what is a quite complicated philosophical text, as well as a new translation into English.

Havrda, in accordance with the present state of the art, describes the history of the Eighth Book of the *Stromata*, its composition, conceptual background, and possible sources, as well as different scholarly approaches to it. The publication, in my opinion, because of its well defined but also narrow focus, should be treated as aimed mainly at scholars already closely acquainted with Clement of Alexandria and his thought. Otherwise, it would need some further introduction to the life and background of Clement, as well as to questions concerning Platonic,

Aristotelian, and Stoic philosophical traditions, of which elements and echoes can be found in the Eighth Book.

Havrda's edition of the original text, especially on points where he disagrees with the classic edition by Stählin, seems in general to be properly argued for. As to the translation, Havrda, to be sure, as he admits himself, is not a native English speaker (just like the author of the present review). However, having produced several translations of philosophical texts of the Patristic period, I share the opinion that an academic translation can only ever be relatively good, at best. The main role of such a translation is not to provide the reader with smoothly and elegantly constructed paraphrases, but to offer a tool that will be useful in understanding the original thought of the author, it keeping maximally close to the original text and allowing only a minimal amount of the translator's own interpretation to be imposed on the rendering. In my opinion, Havrda's translation meets these requirements. While there are some places in the translation where, with the greatest respect, I disagree with Havrda (as he himself acknowledges in his publication), I found his translation to be more accurate and faithful to the original text than the translations already well known to me by William Wilson (in English) and Janina Niemirska-Pliszczyńska (in Polish).

If I were compelled to pick out some elements with which I am not fully satisfied, these would concern the visual aspect of the printed version. Some editor's choices concerning headers and note formatting, for me as a reader, seem quite questionable, as they are oddly formatted and make the text less legible. Still, such minor failures absolutely do not affect the overall quality of the publication.

In short, I consider the study produced by Mathias Havrda to be of significant value for researchers working on Medioplatonic and Patristic philosophy.

ANNA ZHYRKOVA